

2/18/23

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Flexer and Rep. Blumenthal, Vice-Chairs Sen. Slap and Rep. Morin-Bello, Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco, and Distinguished Members of the GAE Committee,

My name is Dr. Carol Rizzolo. I have the honor of serving as:

- The lead of CT Shoreline Indivisible, a grassroots progressive group with over 1000 members
- Founding organizer and lead organizer of Safe Vote CT, a coalition of 15-20 non-partisan groups in CT representing approximately 20k voters.
- CT Coordinator of Center for Common Ground, a VA based C-3 devoted to getting accurate information to the BIPOC community primarily in voter suppression states
- Board Member, Tri-State Maxed-Out Womens PAC

In addition, I am the recipient of the 2021 Medallion Award from the National Association of Secretaries of State for my work in motivating 1000's of volunteers to participate in non-partisan voting rights in our state.

I am writing with unconditional support of:

- [S.B. No. 1064](#) (Raised) An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting.
- [H.B. No. 5004](#) (Comm) An Act Implementing Early Voting
- [S.J. No. 29](#) (Comm) Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting
- [H.J. No. 1](#) (Comm) Resolution Approving a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting
- [H.B. No. 6693](#) (Raised) An Act Concerning Absentee Voting

And Conditional Support of:

- [S.B. No. 1057](#) (Raised) An Act Concerning the Secretary of the State and Early Voting.

As regards the implementation of Early Voting, I firmly support:

- 14-18 days of Early Voting including early mornings, evenings, and multiple weekends.
- A minimum of Early Voting locations to be determined by population of Age Eligible Voters, not merely by total population
- At least one EV location must be accessible by public transportation
- Allow same day registration during the Early Voting period
- Fund adequate worker and public education campaigns about this process
- Fund municipalities of all sizes to allow the most accessible voting for all voters

As regards the placing of a referendum on the ballot in 2024 to give voters the chance to weigh in on No Excuse Absentee Voting, I firmly support this.

- The ability to vote by AB during Covid pandemic created great increase in voter turnout
- 35% of 2020 CT ballots were absentee (over 650,000 voters) with less than 1% of ballots rejected – lowest in recent history.
- Voters want choice and we should encourage making voting available to all eligible voters

Personal Statement:

I am the primary caregiver for my 100 yr old Mom. We have been fortunate in that she has lived independently until 12/22 when she fell. She is now at the point in her life when she needs aides with her 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. After much screening, I haven been very fortunate to find many loving caregivers.

What has been eye opening to me has been how many of these women work 2-3 jobs just to make ends meet. Whether they work privately for us or within a larger institution, each one ranging from 29 yrs old to 69 yrs old, is working several jobs and fully willing and eager to pick up extra hours whenever they can . As you might imagine, none of these women would qualify for an Absentee ballot under our current restrictive laws and none of them could afford to give up working hours to be able to vote on election day . Their working hours are erratic and so, without the possibility of Early

Voting or No Excuse Absentee their important voices are silenced in our current electoral system. These women are but a few of those who our society calls “essential workers.” I argue that their voices are essential as well and it is the civic responsibility of our legislators to give them every opportunity to be heard.

One other story that has been completely eye opening for me. I live in Guilford and we have competent and kind postal workers. One of women behind the counter is a young woman of color who lives in New Haven. She heard me speaking about voting and was compelled to tell me her story. She has 3 children at home. Every weekday morning she gets up early to get them ready for school and get them to school. She leaves New Haven to get to Guilford by 8 AM. She works until 5 PM at which point she drives back to New Haven, takes care of dinner for her children, bathes them, helps them with homework, puts them to bed. Even on Election Day. Given that our postal workers must work on Election Day, they too are potentially disenfranchised from our electoral politics. They too do not qualify for Absentee Ballots under our restrictive access laws. And yet we all rely on them to keep our lives running smoothly. I again argue that their voices are essential as well and it is the civic responsibility of our legislators to give them every opportunity to be heard.

I hope and trust that both of these stories of the silenced voices in my personal world, in our state, and in our communities explain my passion for expanding voting access to all age eligible voters in CT.

I take my responsibility as an American citizen seriously. Our ancestors fought and died to have their voices heard. Casting my ballot is the way that I honor their memory and their sacrifice. It is imperative that we expand ballot access here in CT so that all of our voices can be heard.

Thank you.

Carol Rizzolo
Guilford , CT